The General Aniceto Lacson Ancestral House

Hacienda Maria a'd Rosario Talisay City, Negros Occidental

RAYMOND FUENTES

THAT'S LIFE

First of 2 parts

A National Historical Landmark

There was a little girl named Nena, who lived with her parents and siblings in this big house in the middle of a large sugar plantation estate. Everyday, her first cousin Anna, who lived next door, would come and play with her. Though so different, they were very close and shared many interests and had a lot of things in common.

One day, while they were playing in the house, Nena distinctly heard dance music of yesteryears being played by an orchestra and the loud booming voice of a man. She told her parents about it. They were puzzled, as there was no orchestra, nor music being played. And there was no other man around, except for her father. This incident has been told and retold by the family.

The loud booming voice she heard was believed to be that of their Prominent leaders like Emilio Aguinaldo, Andres Bonifacio, Emilio Jacinto, General Luna, Manuel Quezon, Sergio Osmena, Claro M. Recto and many other famous persons came and stayed in this house. His son Isaac, who became governor of Negros, then congressman and senator, also continued the legacy of his father in politics and used this house for entertaining all the important and famous people who came to Negros.

Born in Molo, Iloilo on April 17, 1857, Aniceto was the 5th of seven children of Lucio Lacson and Clara Ledesma of Iloilo, who migrated to Negros, when Aniceto was still very young. They had eight children: (1) the eldest Bartolome married Primitiva Guanzon; (2) Rosendo married four times - Concepcion de Paula, Andrea de la Flor, Anacleta Montillano, and Asuncion Aguilar; (3)Domingo married Trinidad Regalado; (4)

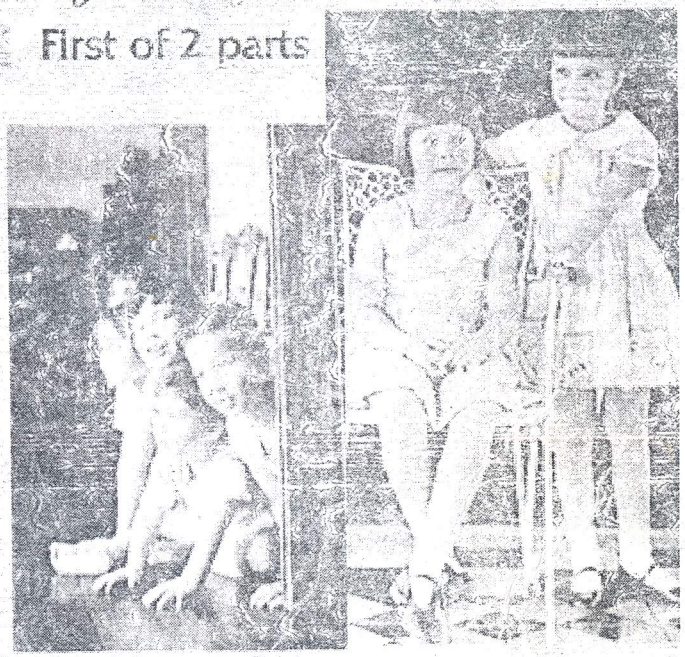
One day, while they were playing in the house, Nena distinctly heard dance music of yesteryears being played by an orchestra and the loud booming voice of a man.

lution. While a student in Manila, he had the opportunity to meet the Supremo of the Katipunan, Andres Bonifacio, with whom he had a secret blood compact. He was the only Negrense, who had this honor and consequently became a member of the Katipunan.

When his father became bedridden, he took charge of all the work in the haciendas and did much to improve the properties. As a result, through his efforts his father became one of the richest men in Negros. When time came to divide his father's properties, his other brothers chose the best producing haciendas. Aniceto, for his part, chose the uncultivated ones. Thus, he received more lands from his father than his brothers. Through sheer hard work, he improved these lands and turned them into one of the best producing haciendas in Negros.

Aniceto married Rosario Araneta, a direct descendant of the Kabungsuan royal family of Mindanao, daughter of Patricio Cabunsol Araneta and Leoncia children. They were: (1)Resureccion married Carlos Sackermann; (2)Margarita, a former Miss Negros Occidental married William Gemperle; (3)Leonila married Angel Gamboa; (4)Leoncia died young; (5)Nicolas married Amparo Lacson, sister of Arsenio Lacson, mayor of Manila, parents of the famous and controversial Rose Lacson Hancock-Portheus of Perth, Australia; (6)Juan married Reymunda Villareal; (7)Lucio, single; (8)Luis, single; (9)Consuelo married Sebastian Corro; and (10)Jose married Estelita Adrias.

In the late 1800's, a Swiss businessman by the name of Luchinger decided to sell his vast properties in Matabang, Talisay, which he earlier purchased from Nicolas Loney, the biggest sugar producer in Negros at that time. It was offered to Aniceto Lacson, but he did not have enough ready cash. Luchinger was willing to sell it on installment provided Aniceto's father Lucio guaranteed for it. But Lucio refused as the venture appeared risky. Aniceto negotiated with Luchinger to agree to sell it to him without a guarantor. Knowing



Romping in the house

Young Anna and Nena

General Aniceto Lacson with 24 year old

Rare Photo of General Aniceto Lacson

incident has been told and retold by the family.

The loud booming voice she heard was believed to be that of their great-grandfather General Aniceto Lacson, who together with General Juan Araneta, figured prominently in the Negros Revolution of November 5, 1898 and became president of the Republic of Negros. He was a tall and robust man, a cheerful person, who lived like a potentate and loved all the pomp. He had an extraordinary zest for living, regularly entertaining his friends and telling them tales in his loud booming voice. He was a fabulous figure from a fabulous past. And this was the house he built. It was here where he kept and entertained guests for weeks and held week-long parties with a live orchestra that played for days and sumptuous food prepared by Chinese cooks imported from Hong Kong.

- Concepcion de Paula, Andrea de la Flor, Anacleta Montillano, and Asuncion Aguilar; (3)Domingo married Trinidad Regalado; (4) Balbina, single; (5) Aniceto married twice Rosario Araneta and then Magdalena Torres; (6) Eulalio married Rosario Avancena; (7) Mariano married twice - Maria Braga and then Concepcion Diaz,

Lucio became a widower and remarried Sylvestra Vargas. Their children were: Fabian, Gonzalo, Magdaleno, Antonio, Jose and Gregorio. (Unfortunately, no information was given whom his other children from his second marriage were married to.)

Aniceto's early education began under a private tutelage in Molo, Iloilo. He later on studied commerce at the Ateneo Municipal de Manila, where he had as classmates General Juan Araneta, Dr. Jose Rizal, and other Filipinos who later figured in the Philippine revo-

Araneta, a direct descendant of the Kabungsuan royal family of Mindanao, daughter of Patricio Cabunsol Araneta and Leoncia Araneta, with whom he sired 11 children. They were: (1) Emilio and (2) Matilde, both died at an early age; (3) Jesusa married Jose Arroyo (grandparents of Atty. Mike Arroyo, First Gentleman, husband of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo); (4) Carmen married Ricardo Claparols, a Catalan from Barcelona, Spain; (5) Enriqueta married Domingo Lacson III, a first cousin; (6) Isaac, who became governor of Negros, then congressman and senator of the Republic married Carmen Paterno; (7) Mariano married Lilia Montilla; (8) Perfecta married Santiago Franco; (9) Jose, died young; (10) Aniceto, Jr. married Aurora Lacson, a cousin; and (11) Dominador married Visitacion Lacson, another cousin.

With his second wife, Magdalena Torres, he had 10

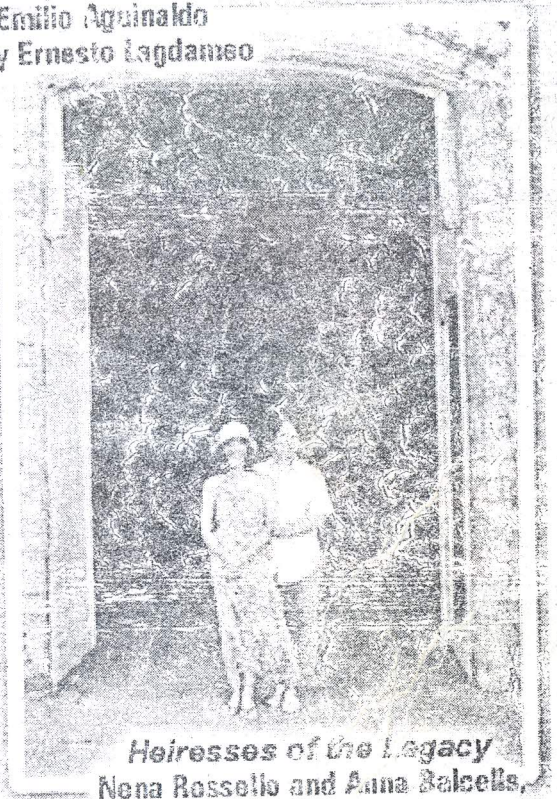
refused as the venture appeared risky. Aniceto negotiated with Luchinger to agree to sell it to him without a guarantor. Knowing that Aniceto was hardworking, honest, and followed through with his business commitments, Luchinger agreed.

Being devout Catholics, Aniceto and his wife Rosario began novenas to Our Lady of the Rosary. He believed the Our Lady was the only one, who could help him. One day, while in Iloilo, Smith Bell & Co., Ltd., a trading company, offered to sell him two boatloads of rice coming in from Saigon. Aniceto accepted. And it so happened the price of rice went up before it was unloaded from the steamer. He sold the rice cargo for a substantial profit and was able to pay the balance for the properties he bought from Luchinger. In gratitude to Our Lady of the Rosary, he renamed Hacienda Matab-ang, Hacienda Maria del Rosario and built a grotto in front of his house. Until his death in 1931 and up to this day, the holy rosary is prayed in front of the grotto everyday

(To be continued)

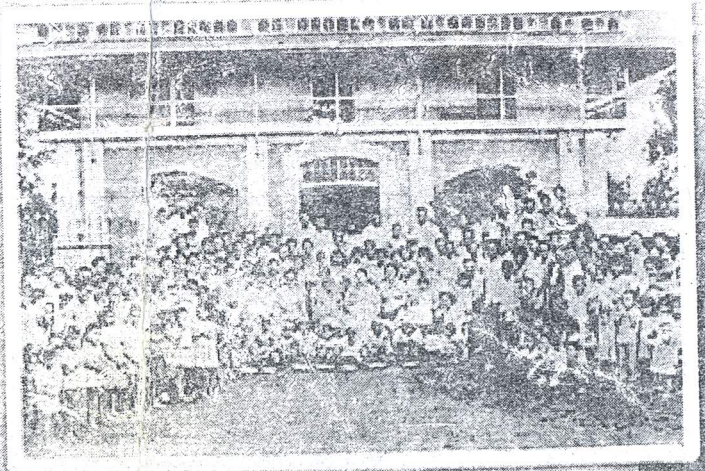
Don't miss the next issue of SUNSTAR Weekend

Rare Photo of General Aniceto Lacson



General Aniceto Lacson with 24 year old President Emilio Aguinaldo and Secretary Ernesto Lagdameo

Aniceto Lacson (Center) with the Montillas of Ubay, Pulupandan, Circa1918



Carmen Lacson Claparols, her children, grandchildren with farm workers and their children circa 1960's

Heiresses of the Legacy
Nena Rossello and Anna Balcells, great-grandaughters of Gen. Aniceto Lacson

The General Aniceto Lacson Ancestral House

(Last of 2 Parts)

Hacienda Maria del Rosario, Talisay City, Negros Occidental
A National Historical Landmark

RAYMOND FUENTES

THAT'S LIFE

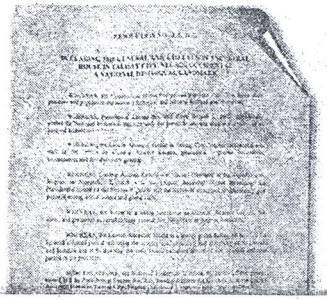
In 1880, Aniceto Lacson began constructing his house in Hda. Maria del Rosario, Influenced by his travels in Europe and Latin America, the house is styled similar to those found in Canary Islands and the Caribbean. The best materials were used construct the house: narra, mahogany and kamagong. A Spanish architect was brought in from Spain, as well as craftsmen from China. Interior furnishings and decorations were all imported from China, Japan, and Europe.

THE LACSON-CLAPAROLS FAMILY 1937 FRONT (FROM LEFT) EDUARDO, DONA CARMEN, TERESITA WHO DIED AT THE AGE OF 10 BEING HELDBY DON ROCARDO BACK: LAYETTE, JAIME AND CARMITA

Among features of interest is the balcony that surrounds the entire second floor giving Lacson a panoramic view of his vast property and its surroundings and a watchtower that had a commanding view of Talisay, Silay, and Bacolod. (Eventually his daughter Carmen had this tower removed and the materials transferred to build granite from China and the outside columns made of *coquina*, a white coral stone. At the back portion of the house are four big arches that are entrances to the large open spaces used as stalls for the family horses, poultry and livestock. In the '30s and '40s, these held the machineries from Europe for pasteurizing and bottling

DOÑA CARMEN LACSON CLAPAROLS

occupied by Carmen Lacson Claparols, the second eldest daughter of Gen. Lacson, now widowed. (Her husband Ricardo Claparols met a tragic death together with many members of Manila's Spanish-mestizo families, when an American plane bombed the Malate church during the war.) In actuality, it



Patricia "Patty", single; Victoria "Vicky" married to Steve Guggenheimer of Australia; Alexandra "Alexi" married Mark Mallari; Michael, single;

(2)Carmita married Alberto Balcells of Barcelona, Spain and their children are: Eduardo, single; Anna, single; Alfonso "Pons" married Lynne Gowlett of Australia; Carlos, popular bass guitarist of the famous band "Dawn" and now councilor of Talisay City;

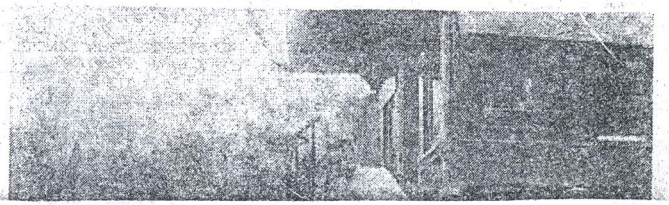
(3) Jaime married Sagrario Medina of Pampanga and their children are: Ricardo "Ricky" married Julie Ledesma; Antonio formerly married to Vicky Panlilio; Javier, single; Jaime, Jr. married Gigi Arenas; Philip formerly married to Malou Lizares;

(4)Layette married Franciso "Paco" Rossello of Barcelona, Spain and their children

fear of it getting damaged or stolen. The house that General Aniceto Lacson built was left empty and abandoned.

In 1981, the empty house was lent out for the filming of Lino Brocka's "Gumising Ka Maruha". There was a scene that required more than a hundred extras to be on the second floor, thus stressing the second floor. Then for 10 years, from 1989-99, the Marian Missionaries, a contemplative order under the bishop of Bacolod used the house. Unfortunately, a lot of carvings were damaged and the surrounding grounds were left unattended and allowed to deteriorate. The flooring, ceiling and beams on the second floor are now crumbling and dropped several inches below its original level. The house that has seen a glorious past and so rich in history is very badly in need of repair.

Now these two girls, who



lovely example of a grand *bahay na bato* of the Spanish colonial period reflecting the artistry, craftsmanship and ingenuity of its owners and builders; the Presidential House of the Republic of Negros and the venue of important revolutionary and political meets, social events, and grand balls; a living testimony to General Aniceto Lacson, his ideals and his greatness as revolutionary general and President of *Republica de Negros* has been declared a National Historical Landmark.

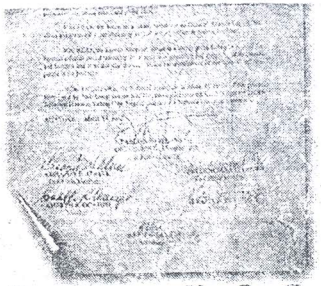
The heirs' mission is to bring the house to its original grandeur and to share it with the people of Negros, as well as the whole world. For now, it seems like a long hard road ahead, but the journey has begun.*

Silay, and Bacolod. (Eventually his daughter Carmen had this tower removed and the materials transferred to build an entire house in Iloilo!) At the back are two twin verandas open on both sides, which were used for entertainment and relaxation. They opened to a spectacular view of the mountains on one side and the sea on the other. The ground floor to ceiling height reaches 6.10 meters and the second story, a height of 4.57 meters. The most interesting feature is the impressive grand stairway with its intricately carved staircase and balusters, a masterwork of the Chinese craftsmen brought in from China. President Manuel Quezon, who was a frequent visitor once commented, "Don Aniceto, your staircase is grander than mine in Malacanang Palace." The other unique features are the tracery rose windows that allow music to be heard, as well as air to flow through the rooms. The ground flooring is made of *piedra china*,

try and livestock. In the '30s and '40s, these held the machineries from Europe for pasteurizing and bottling fresh milk and for making butter. The products were sold in Talisay and Bacolod.

Unique to this house is the chapel on the left ground level, where up to this day, Mass is said every Sunday. The story behind the chapel was that when the guerrillas came to torch the house, (so that the Japanese could not occupy it), the match wouldn't light up no matter how much they tried. They later on changed their mind and left. This was attributed to God's presence in the chapel. The Japanese eventually occupied the house and made it their headquarters up until the Americans came. Executions were said to have been held here during the Japanese occupation. Bullet marks can still be seen on the walls. The American generals also used the house for a year.

By 1947, the house was returned to its rightful owners,

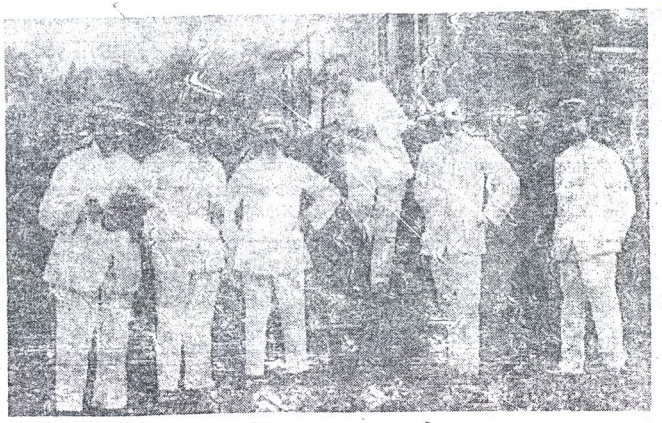


RESOLUTION NO.2, S. 202, DECLARING THE GENERAL ANICETO LACSON ANCESTRAL HOUSE IN TALISAY CITY, NEGROS OCCIDENTAL A NATIONAL HISTORICAL LANDMARK

during the war.) In actuality, it was her younger brother Aniceto Lacson, Jr., who was the original heir to the ancestral house and the surrounding Hacienda Maria del Rosario. Carmen and her husband Ricardo had Hacienda Cristina in La Carlota. Sometime in the 1930's Carmen and Aniceto, Jr. for some reason agreed to exchange properties – he getting Hacienda Cristina and she Hacienda Maria del Rosario. Aside from the exchange of haciendas, the Claparols couple paid Aniceto, Jr. an additional 80,000 pesos for the house. Thus at one point it also became known as the Claparols house. Carmen lived in this house until her death in 1963. Her children and grandchildren are now the present owners of this house. They are: (1) the eldest son Eduardo "Eddie", now deceased, a very popular and well-loved figure in the Bacolod circles married Celia Javellana of Iloilo and their children are: Cynthia married Rolando Rodriguez; Rosario "Chary", now Sr. Mary Cecilia of the Assumption Order; Rossello of Barcelona, Spain and their children are: Francisco, Jr. "Paquito" married Marivic Llamas; Carmen "Nena" separated from Pedro Oviedo, an American of Chilean descent; Miguel married Susan Faust; Lourdes, who died young at age 30, married Jessie de Leon; Teresa married Ullrich Plett of Germany.

(9) and the youngest Teresita, died from typhoid fever at an early age of 10. Her death devastated not only the Claparols, but the entire Lacson family as well. Ricardo Claparols was heard to cry out at night for months after her death.

Up until 1970, Layette Claparols and her husband Paco Rossello with their five children lived in the house. But they had to evacuate when a strong typhoon blew off the roof and the rains came pouring through the entire house. The house was repaired soon after and for five years became a tourist destination. Local and foreign visitors came and admired the beauty of the house and richness of its furnishings, and the history it contained. The dining area had a long table that could seat up to 30 persons. By 1978, the heirs decided to remove and divide the furniture among themselves for

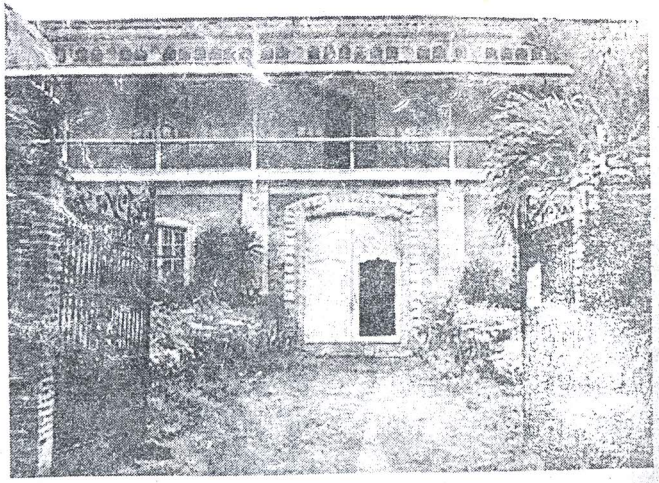


RICARDO CLAPAROLS (2ND FROM LEFT) WITH LOCOMOTIVE

used to romp and play in this house, have grown up to be energetic women with the same vision. Together, they are spearheading the revival and restoration of this house. Anna Balcells, Nena Rossello and the other Lacson-Claparols heirs have formed a foundation to protect their legacy.

Recently on March 13, 2002, through Resolution No.2,S.202, the General Aniceto Lacson Ancestral House, a

HDA. VIEW TAKEN FROM THE VERANDA



FRONT GATE

YOUNG CARMEN LACSON AND YOUNG RICARDO CLAPAROLS

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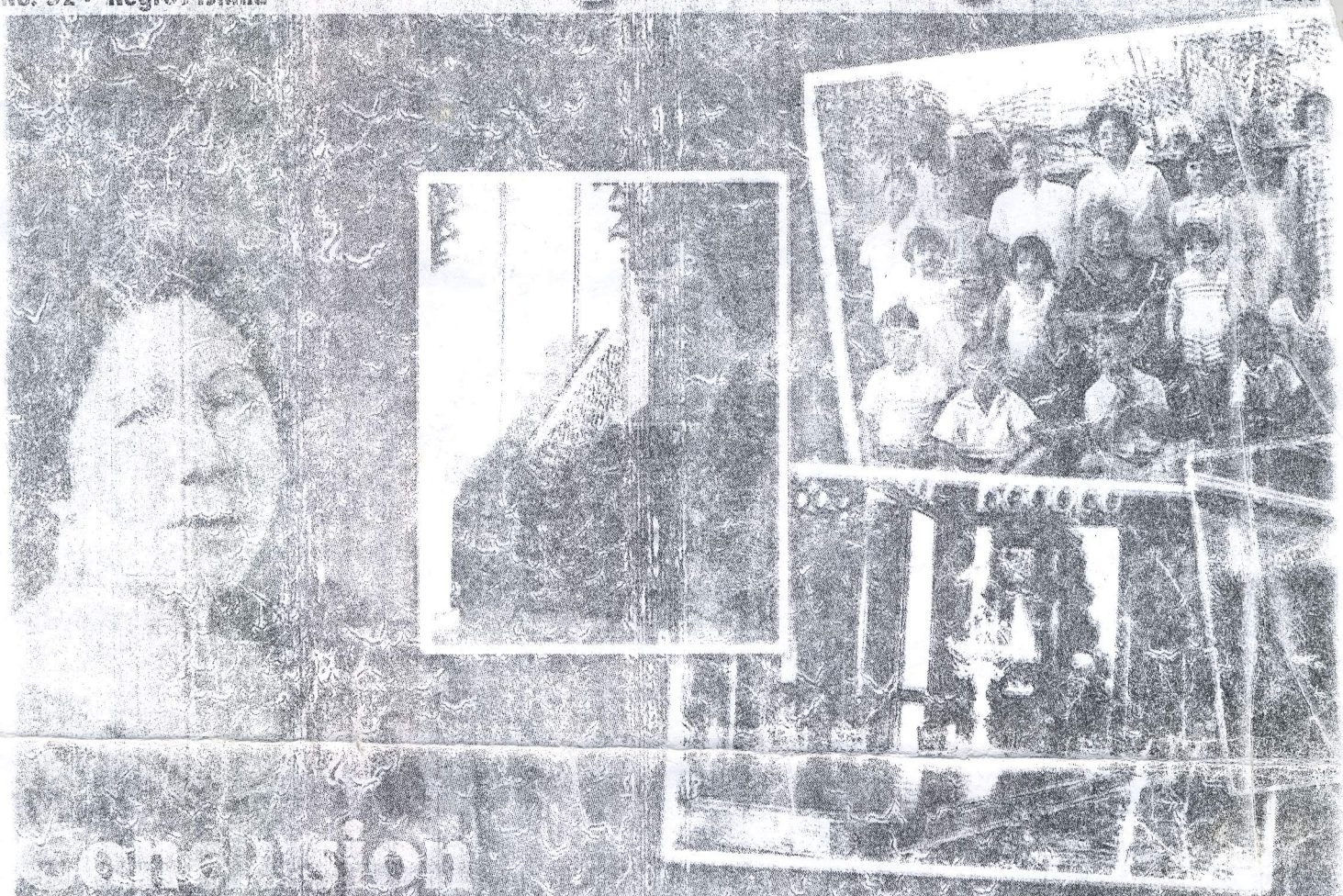

Conversion
The General Aniceto Lacso Ancestral House

PLAYING